

## Education

Securing our schools and keeping New Jerseyans safe from violence are among Steve's top priorities. As part of his ongoing efforts to ensure students are safe, he recently introduced Phylicia's Law. This bill would require public schools to have safety plans and security procedures in place for school-run, overnight, off-premises field trips. The legislation is named in honor of Phylicia Moore (pictured), a student from Teaneck who died while on a school-sponsored trip to Ghana. Phylicia's Law is endorsed by the Parent Teacher Association and the National Education Association.

Congressman  
Rothman to Introduce "Phylicia's Law"

On December 4, 2007,  
Congressman Steve Rothman (D-Fair Lawn) introduced Phylicia's Law, a bill to require public schools to have safety plans and security procedures in place for school-run, overnight, off-premises field trips. The legislation is named in honor of Phylicia Moore, an 18-year-old student from Teaneck who died this past April while on a school-sponsored service trip to Ghana. Phylicia's parents, Douglas and Lola Moore, joined Rothman outside of his Hackensack office to announce the legislation.

"Every  
child's life is precious so when there are reasonable steps that we can take to better protect our young people, then I believe we should take them. It is not unreasonable to put safety plans and procedures in place before a trip occurs. This will help ensure that all involved - the schools, the chaperones, the students, and parents - know what their individual roles and responsibilities are on a trip and what will happen should tragedy strike," said Rothman.

Phylicia's  
Law says that at a minimum a safety plan should address policies on curfews, room checks, and chaperone qualifications, and emergency procedures to be followed in the case of serious injury or death. However, school districts, who know their own schools and students best, will have full discretion to set the specific requirements in a plan as they see fit. Parents will see the policies before approving a trip and can then determine whether they feel that it is safe for their child to go.

Lola and Douglas  
Moore (pictured) strongly support Phylicia's Law. Lola Moore said:

"Phylicia's

father and I are so grateful that Congressman Rothman and our attorney, Nancy Lucianna, realized that this desperately needed law will not only protect children in the future, but will directly help us towards healing from the loss of our daughter, Phylicia. This will be a particularly meaningful legacy for our daughter because she was indeed so uniquely other oriented and that is why she chose this particular African trip for her Senior Project. She worked so hard to raise funds for a school and an Orphanage, in Ghana, for infants with AIDS.

"To

be honest, we all know and accept that Phylicia's loss is irreconcilable, but Doug and I feel that Phylicia's Law will prevent tragedies like ours from occurring in the future. We encourage Congress to enact this bill, Phylicia's Law, so that all students will be protected and safe on school trips and that Phylicia's death would not be utterly wasted."

Federal

law currently requires public schools to have safety plans and security procedures in place for the physical campus of the school. However, there are no such requirements when schools take students off-campus on field trips. Phylicia's Law addresses this deficiency.

The

National Parent-Teacher

Association (PTA) has also endorsed Phylicia's Law. In a letter to Rep. Rothman, National President of the PTA, Jan Harp Domene, wrote:

"The

PTA applauds your effort in remedying this situation by introducing your bill, Phylicia's Law. By requiring school districts to develop and distribute written safety plans for overnight school trips, we hope schools will be able to continue to provide these invaluable experiences for students while ensuring that children are safeguarded."

Congressman

Rothman has served the 9th Congressional District of New Jersey, which includes Teaneck and 36 other towns, in the U.S. House of Representatives since 1996. He has a strong record on school safety. Working with the late Congressman Henry Hyde (R-IL), Rothman created the Secure Our Schools program in 2000. Secure Our Schools is a federal matching grant program to help local governments afford security equipment and training in their schools.

To date, Rothman has secured over \$64 million dollars for Secure Our Schools grants, which have been distributed to 48 states, benefiting over 2,400 schools nationwide. In New Jersey alone, 86 Secure Our Schools grants have been awarded to school districts. Those grants were worth over \$6.7 million and helped improve the security of 180 schools.

#### Related News & Information

- Text of the PTA endorsement of Phylicia's Law
- Text of Phylicia's Law
- Issue: Secure Our Schools
- Issue: College Affordability